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REVIEWS

Sex and Character. By OTTO WEININGER. Authorized Translation from the Sixth German Edition. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1906. Pp. xxii+349.

No men who really think deeply about women retain a high opinion of them; men either despise women or they have never thought seriously about them. (P. 236.)

Woman is neither high-minded nor low-minded, strong-minded nor weak-minded. She is the opposite of all these. Mind cannot be predicated of her at all; she is mindless. (P. 253.)

Women have no existence and no essence; they are not, they are nothing. Mankind occurs as male or female, as something or nothing. Woman has no share in ontological reality, no relation to the thing-in-itself, which in the deepest interpretation is the absolute, is God. Man in his highest form, the genius, has such a relation, and for him the absolute is either the conception of the highest worth of existence, in which case he is a philosopher; or it is the wonderful fairyland of dreams, the kingdom of absolute beauty, and then he is an artist. Both views mean the same. Woman has no relation to the idea, she neither affirms nor denies it; she is neither moral nor anti-moral; mathematically speaking, she has no sign; she is purposeless, neither good nor bad, neither angel nor devil, never egotistical (and therefore has often been said to be altruistic); she is as non-moral as she is non-logical. But all existence is moral and logical existence. So woman has no existence. (P. 286.)

The woman of the highest standard is immeasurably beneath the man of the lowest standard. (P. 302.)

I have shown that logical and ethical phenomena come together in the conception of truth as the ultimate good, and posit the existence of an intelligible ego or soul, as a form of being of the highest super-empirical reality. In such a being as the absolute female there are no logical and ethical phenomena, and, therefore, the ground for the assumption of a soul is absent. The absolute female knows neither the logical nor the moral imperative, and the words law and duty, duty toward herself, are words which are least familiar to her. The inference that she is lacking in supersensual personality is fully justified. The absolute female has no ego. (P. 186.)

A psychological proof that the power of making judgments is a masculine trait lies in the fact that woman recognizes it as such, and that it acts on her as a tertiary sexual character of the male. A woman always expects definite

convictions in a man, and appropriates them; she has no understanding of indecision in a man. She always expects a man to talk, and a man's speech is to her a sign of his manliness. It is true that woman has the gift of speech, but she has not the art of talking; she converses (flirts) or chatters, but she does not talk. She is most dangerous, however, when she is dumb, for men are only too inclined to take her quiescence for silence. (P. 195.)

The absolute female, then, is devoid not only of the logical rules, but of the function of making concepts and judgments which depend on them. As the very nature of the conceptual faculty consists in posing subject against object, and as the subject takes its fullest and deepest meaning from its power of forming judgments on its objects, it is clear that woman cannot be recognized as possessing even the subject. (P. 195.)

I must add to the exposition of the non-logical nature of the female some statements as to her non-moral nature. The profound falseness of woman, the result of the want in her of a permanent relation to the idea of truth or the idea of value, would prove a subject of discussion so exhaustive that I must go to work another way. There are such endless imitations of ethics, such confusing copies of morality, that women are often said to be on a moral plane higher than man. I have already pointed out the need to distinguish between the non-moral and immoral, and I now repeat that with regard to women we can talk only of the non-moral, or the complete absence of a moral sense. I am not arguing that woman is evil and anti-moral; I state that she cannot be really evil; *she is merely non-moral.* (Pp. 195–97.)

A mother makes no difference in arranging a marriage for her own daughter and for any other girl, and is just as glad to do it for the latter if it does not interfere with the interests of her own family; it is the same thing, match-making throughout, and there is no psychological difference in making a match for her own daughter and doing the same thing for a stranger. I would even go so far as to say that a mother is not inconsolable if a stranger, however common and undesirable, desires and seduces her daughter. (P. 255.)

We may now give with certainty a conclusive answer to the question as to the giftedness of the sexes: there are women with undoubted traits of genius, but there is no female genius, and there never has been one (not even amongst the masculine women of history which were dealt with in the first part) *and there never can be one.* How could a soulless being possess genius? The possession of genius is identical with profundity; and if anyone were to try to combine woman and profundity as subject and predicate, he would be contradicted on all sides. A female genius is a contradiction in terms, for genius is simply intensified, perfectly developed, universally conscious maleness. (P. 189.)

Mr. Weininger's serious and ambitious study is the most remarkable jumble of insane babble and brilliant suggestion that it has been

my fortune to consider seriously. The author takes himself and his subject seriously, and while he is obviously prepared for his work neither on the psychological, biological, nor yet the ethnological side, yet he is almost prepared in all of these fields, and brings to the subject a most astonishing originality. There is exhibited the most acute and subtle mental play throughout, but the whole argument is characterized by downright unreasonableness. The man (he was almost a boy) was a genius, a German genius, and the volume is remarkable, not as a contribution to science but as a work of the imagination, and an exhibition of what fantastic antics the human mind is capable of. The form also is as bizarre as the content. There are parts so poor, obscure, illogical, and stupid that they would not be accepted in a college boy's essay, and other parts worthy of Kant or Schopenhauer.

We almost feel that such a mind is detached from its environment and is creating a world of its own, but that this is not and cannot be so is shown in a most interesting manner by the fact that in the concrete illustrations which he uses to illustrate the traits of womankind in general (as he thinks) he is really speaking always of German Gretchen or her mother. He falls into the same error as Karl Vogt who some years ago, in a description of the mental traits of women students at Zurich, denied woman in general the ability to understand certain subjects in which American university women were already confessedly conspicuously proficient. So Weininger reflects—vaguely, indeed, and fantastically, as a dream reflects reality—the character of the German woman. The American woman, however, is quite a different thing, and presents characters the very opposite of what Weininger claims are and must be the characters of woman universally and in perpetuity. It has not even, seemingly, occurred to him that the status of woman, as of the lower races, is in a measure dependent on the run of habit in her group and the limited range of her attention.

But impossible and extra-phenomenal as the book certainly is, it is yet worth the while. Jevons has remarked that the greatest inventor is the one whose mind is visited by the largest number of random guesses. Anything which brings more points of view into the case is valuable, and this book is rich in this respect. That no one is either completely male or completely female is for instance, a good thesis, and the bearing of this view on the phenomena of sexual inversion is very suggestively stated and argued. And two

other of the writer's main propositions amount essentially to this, namely, that the male is more highly differentiated than the female, and that the female is more completely sexually saturated and her interests more sexually limited than in the case of male. These are probably truths, though not new ones, and it would have been fortunate if he had substituted a simple and sane exposition of them for such extravagant statements as I have quoted above.

W. I. THOMAS.

Some Ethical Gains through Legislation. By FLORENCE KELLY. New York: The Macmillan Co., 1905. Pp. 341.

The titles of the chapters indicate the scope of the volume: the right to childhood; the child, the state, and the nation; the right to leisure; judicial interpretations of the right to leisure; the right of women to the ballot; the rights of purchasers, and the courts. In the appendix are reprinted several of the most important decisions bearing on the subjects.

One marked distinction of Mrs. Kelley's discussions is the vividness of the concrete images used to enforce the argument, and these illustrations are not borrowed from books; they come from personal observations as factory inspector, special agent of the Bureau of Statistics of Illinois, resident of Hull House and of the Nurses' Settlement, New York, during thirteen years; and secretary of the National Consumers' League since 1899.

This is a fine example of the kind of ethical discussion which really grips the modern conscience. That which Professor Small has declared to be the demand upon ethics is here actually done for certain definite problems. The exact situation is analyzed and the significant facts are laid bare, and a judgment is asked in view of the contradiction between the requirements of life and the actual conditions and the existing law. There is no escape from the issue save in refusal to read. Moral umbrellas will not shed this rain of fire, and no citizen can escape; all are participants in the evil, and all suffer, most of all the innocent.

One of the author's indictments falls heavily on those forms of philanthropy which train girls only to sew when the needle trades are already at the bottom of the scale of wages, and then send out the poor wretches to a labor market which is packed to the doors with hungry competitors.